

Serial No.: 10/080,499

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 20, 22, 24 to 41 are pending in the application.

An Information Disclosure Statement is being prepared and will be filed under separate cover.

First of all, Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for recognizing the allowability of claims 1 to 20, 23, 24 and 29 to 38, if made independent from a rejected base claim.

With respect to the rejection of claims 21, 22, 25 to 28 and 39 to 40 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kunz et al., reconsideration by the Examiner is respectfully requested on the following grounds.

As the Examiner will note, new claim 41 has been introduced to cover, in independent form, the subject matter of former claim 23. With the introduction of new claim 41, former claims 21 and 23 have been cancelled. Original claim 23 being otherwise allowable (if not dependent on a rejected base claim), it is thus believed that new claim 41, corresponding to former claim 23 amended to be independent, is allowable.

As a consequence of the deletion of claims 21 and 23 and the introduction of new claim 41, the dependency of claims 22, 24, 25 and 40 has now been amended to be dependent on new claim 41. Thus, claims 22, 25 to 28 and 39 to 40 are now directly or indirectly dependent on an allowable claim. With such an amendment, it is respectfully submitted that claims 22, 25 to 28 and 39 to 40 are also allowable. Therefore, in view of the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejection of claims 22, 25 to 28 and 39 to 40 is earnestly solicited.

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Furthermore, it is now submitted that with the amendments made herein, claims 23, 24, and 29 to 38 are no longer dependent on a rejected base claim. Accordingly, claims 23, 24 and 29 to 38 are now also believed to be allowable.

Applicants submit that no new matter has been added by the present amendments.

Therefore, it is submitted that the claims as now presented are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the Examiner's rejections is respectfully requested. Allowance of claims 1 to 20, 22, and 24 to 41 at an early date is solicited.

In the event that there are any questions concerning this amendment or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned so that prosecution of this application may be expedited.

No additional fees are believed to be necessitated by this amendment. However, should this be an error, authorization is hereby give to charge Deposit Account No. 50-0850 for any underpayment or to credit any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 2/2/04

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